

**MILWAUKEE WAR MEMORIAL CONTROVERSY HEATS UP  
VETERANS CALL FOR ART MUSEUM TO PAY FAIR SHARE**  
*Urge War Memorial, Art Museum to Make Veteran Interests a Top Priority*

At the 94<sup>th</sup> Annual Department Convention held July 18th thru the 22<sup>nd</sup>, Legionnaires passed a resolution supporting the Milwaukee County War Memorial. The iconic structure which hosts the Milwaukee Art Museum and other tenants has fallen into disrepair due to chronic underfunding. Recently the Milwaukee Art Museum announce ambitious expansion plan that also called for the museum to assume control of the facility. On September 25<sup>th</sup> the Milwaukee County Veterans Board of Directors called upon the Milwaukee Art Museum to contribute towards the costs of operating the Milwaukee County War Memorial and identified conditions to be met prior to allowing the Art Museum's expansion plans to proceed.

At a meeting held on September 24, the Veterans Board was briefed on the status of negotiations taking place between the War Memorial and Art Museum and took note of recent comments by Art Museum Director Dan Keegan in which he pledged that the Art Museum's planned \$15 million project will not proceed unless it receives the support of Milwaukee County Veterans

The board representing nineteen Veteran Service Organizations responded to the Art Museum's request for veteran support and adopted a resolution calling for the Art Museum to make fair market payments in exchange for the nearly 200,000 square feet it occupies in the War Memorial complex which was created to honor area war dead and has served as a venue for veteran gatherings. The Art Museum occupies approximately 75 percent of the space in the War Memorial buildings below the original structure building that sits at the Mason Street plaza level.

"The Board spoke up because it believes the public and veterans' interests are best served by all tenants at the War Memorial paying their fair share toward operating this memorial and addressing veterans' issues," said Stan Kogutkiewicz, Veterans Board Chairman and member of American Legion Post No. 427 of Milwaukee. "We are calling upon the Art Museum and War Memorial to address unmet veterans' service needs with as much emphasis as they are discussing needed facility repairs."

The resolution adopted by the Veterans Board included the following steps that needed to be in place in order to secure veterans' support for the Art Museum's expansion:

- Requiring the Art Museum to pay their pro-rata share of the costs of operating and maintaining the War Memorial facility;
- Redirecting current taxpayer subsidies to Art Museum to pay for needed repairs and create programs that benefit returning Gulf War Era II veterans;
- Requiring the Art Museum to return to the War Memorial rights to land that the Art Museum laid claim to in a disputed process in 1997.

"We appreciate Mr. Keegan's pledge and have identified specific actions that must occur before Milwaukee County veterans can support this expansion," Kogutkiewicz added. "Veterans will not be used as pawns or scapegoats if MAM doesn't get what they want and we are troubled that the Art Museum has declined several invitations by the War Memorial negotiators to meet – this suggests they believe their leverage resides in the Courthouse and not the community."